



SUCCESS STORY

Reaching Out to Rural Areas through Mobile Radio



A woman speaks with Doko Radio.



A man relates his struggles as an internally displaced person for a local broadcast.

USAID/NEPAL

In August 2006, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) began a 2-year, \$15,000,000 program in Nepal to bolster the current peace process, strengthen governance mechanisms, and support positive, nonviolent community engagement in the country's political, social, and economic future. The objectives of the program are to:

1. Increase access to information and diversify public debate on issues critical to political transition, and
2. Increase the effectiveness of key political transition institutions.

June 2007 – Following the restoration of democracy in 1990, Nepal experienced a media boom, the robustness of which was evident in the prominent role the media played during the historic People's Movement in April 2006, which ultimately led to an end of the 11-year Maoist insurgency and the restoration of Parliament. The media continues to play an influential role as the country prepares for the election of its first Constituent Assembly in November 2007.

In geographically remote areas of Nepal, however, the media has not established a strong foothold, and many radio-blind areas have a negligible media presence. To address the need for a platform for discussions and information dissemination, Antenna Foundation Nepal created Doko Radio to bring radio to remote areas. The project transports a complete mobile broadcast station and studio – which can be carried on foot in traditional bamboo baskets called doko – to some of the most inaccessible areas of the country.

With support from OTI, between March 16 and June 3, 2007, the Doko Radio team was able to reach five remote village development committees (i.e., sub-jurisdictions) covering 12,540 households, or approximately 60,000 people, in five districts (Gorkha, Humla, Darchula, Solukhumbu, and Manang). Pre-recorded radio programs were broadcast to inform residents of ongoing political developments in the country, and the views of locals were also recorded and transmitted. Response to the broadcasts was overwhelmingly positive, with citizens actively engaging on topics such as the Constituent Assembly and the role of youth and political parties in the peace process.

While political transition and local issues were the main topics addressed, people also shared their musical talents and expressed their grievances. In Humla district, citizens said that Doko Radio made it possible to bring local political leaders from all the parties together for the first time in 10 years. And recognizing the empowering effect of radio, the people of Humla, with OTI support, are setting up a permanent FM station.